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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 003878

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2014

TAGS: [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: BRITISH WORKING BORDER PROBLEMS WITH KUWAITIS AND IRAQIS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1641

[1](#)B. KUWAIT 2567

[1](#)C. KUWAIT 2548

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary/Comment: The British Ambassador has been working with the Kuwaitis and UK military elements in Southern Iraq over the last two weeks to resolve some border complaints made by the Kuwaitis. The GOK turned to the UK Embassy partly because of the presence of UK forces in southern Iraq and partly because a UK contractor was apparently building a structure in Umm Qasr that the GOK considered over the line. UK embassy Assistant DATT toured the border area between Umm Qasr and Abdali to see six problematic sites identified by the GOK. He did not believe these constituted violations, but the UK will send an engineering team from its forces in Iraq to take a closer technical look on Friday, 12 November. GOK FM also raised the border issue with us recently, noting disputes with Iraqi farmers along the border, but he raised the issue as an alert, not an action request for the USG. Separately, the GOK reported to the British that the Iraqis had proposed in the last few days that a joint Iraqi/Kuwaiti commission be set up to deal with border management issues. We will stay in touch with the UK mission and the GOK and advise on developments. No action has been requested and we recommend no specific USG action while the British sort through the claims, and direct Kuwaiti/Iraqi cooperation evolves. End Summary/Comment.

GOK Puts the Burden on the UK

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador LeBaron called on his British counterpart on November 10 to discuss problems on the Iraq/Kuwait border. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Dr. Mohammed Sabah al-Salem Al-Sabah had told us during an 8 November meeting that he would be meeting separately with the UK Ambassador about these issues. Ambassador Christopher Wilton said the GOK had first contacted him about two weeks ago to say that there were problems in the Umm Qasr area. The UK Ambassador had been in contact subsequently with a Kuwaiti Colonel in charge of the border police in the area, who had told him that discussions of this problem had reached high levels of the GOK and that there was serious discussion about actions that should be taken. Apparently the problem had been aggravated by an Iraqi Brigadier (NFI) on the Iraqi side who had been heard to say that the Iraqis were merely taking back land that belonged to them anyway. The UK Ambassador had acted to calm the GOK Colonel and UK forces in Iraq had a chat with the Iraqi Brigadier, and Gen. Rollo is keeping an eye on the situation.

[1](#)3. (C) The GOK FM met with the UK Ambassador on November 10 and complained of a UK firm that was constructing a building (apparently a customs office) in Umm Qasr that appeared to cross the border. An assistant DATT from the UK Embassy went to the border in the company of GOK officials a few days ago to view what the GOK officials thought were six problematic sites between Umm Qasr and Abdali. (This appears to be the area where all the suspected violations are occurring.) The UK officer found construction right on the border line, but he could not verify border violations. The UK forces in Iraq will send engineers with the proper technical tools to take another look this Friday. Most of the problems are in and around Umm Qasr, where the UN had built facilities that sometimes straddled the border.

Good News from Baghdad

[1](#)4. (C) On November 9, the Kuwaiti Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs told the UK Ambassador that just in the last few days the Kuwaitis had received a proposal from the Iraqi authorities calling for establishment of a joint commission to deal with border issues. He said that the GOK would respond positively to this suggestion. He also said that the GOK might send a letter to the Security Council noting its efforts to build a continuous pipe along the border line to more clearly define the line and to prevent vehicles from crossing at unauthorized points. The UK Ambassador cautioned

against making this a bigger UNSC issue.

#### Different Approach to Us

15. (C) At the end of a November 8 meeting between Ambassador LeBaron and FM Dr. Mohammed on a variety of issues, the latter independently raised the border problem in a different way, both identifying different problems than those raised with the UK COM and not asking for U.S. action. He said that he was going to see the British Ambassador immediately after the meeting, and said that the GOK was "trying to play it cool" on this "troublesome" issue. The problem, he explained, was not with the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) or the Iraqi Border Police. Dr. Mohammed said that his discussions with the Iraqi Foreign Minister have been good, and that they have worked to set up a joint technical committee. He also did not mention any of the specific allegations previously raised concerning incursions by Iraqi Department of Border Enforcement Police (Ref A.) Dr. Mohammed specifically said that he "does not want any action yet" (by the USG), but that he "did want to alert us" to the situation.

16. (C) Dr. Mohammed explained that due to repeated earlier incursions, some possibly by Iraqi Border Police, some possibly by unknown individuals (Refs B and C), the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior decided to build a pipe barrier along the border, connecting concrete border marking pillars. The MoI is doing this to keep vehicles from coming across, except at the legitimate border crossings. The teams working on this pipe barrier, and other Kuwaiti border-surveying teams have been harassed repeatedly by "individuals with AK-47s", according to Dr. Mohammed. Furthermore, the Foreign Minister said that contractors hired by the Iraqis to build facilities on the Iraq side of the border have crossed over into Kuwait repeatedly, and that these contractors include U.K. nationals.

17. (C) Finally, Dr. Mohammed said that another border-related issue involved property claims by Iraqi farmers for border-area land that ended up in Kuwait after the first Gulf War. The UN set up a fund to compensate the farmers (which has about one million dollars) but Saddam Hussein told the farmers not to take the compensation, according to Dr. Mohammed. In addition to drawing from the fund, "we're willing to pay Kuwaiti money now to resolve these claims."

18. (C) Baghdad minimize considered.  
LeBaron